

7-8 May 1942: U.S. and Japanese aircraft carriers fight the Battle of the Coral Sea, the first naval engagement in history in which ships of the opposing forces do not come within sight of one another.



3-6 June 1942:
U.S. Navy carrier aircraft sink four Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers and a heavy cruiser, in the decisive Battle of Midway.

3 January 1944:
Coast Guard Cmdr. Frank Erickson flies an HNS-1 Hoverfly in first naval helicopter lifesaving mission near New York.



4 December 1950:
Ens. Jesse Brown, the Navy's first black aviator, crash lands near Hagaru-Ri, Korea. He would receive the Distinguished Flying Cross posthumously. Lt. j.g. Thomas Hudner, who crash landed to try to save him, would receive the Medal of Honor.



12 January 1953:
Initial test operations aboard the Navy's first angled deck carrier, USS *Antietam* (CV 36).

3 July 1942:
A PBV launches the first successful firing of an American rocket from a plane in flight.

7 March 1942:
The practical use of the sonobuoy is demonstrated for the first time by the airship K-5 and the submarine S-20.



10 June 1942:
Formal testing of Magnetic Anomaly Detectors (MAD) begins.

26 August 1942:
Capt. Marion E. Carl becomes the first Marine ace over Guadalcanal.

22 October 1942:
Westinghouse receives contract for first American jet engine.



8 November 1942:
Carrier aircraft from USS *Ranger* (CV 4) and several escort carriers support landings in North Africa.

29 June 1943:
NAS Patuxent River, Md., begins functioning as an aircraft test center after taking over the role from NAS Anacostia, D.C.

16 January 1944:
Coast Guard Lt. j.g. Stuart Graham, flying a Sikorsky YR-4B, makes the first helicopter take-off from and landing aboard a ship on the high seas.

19-20 June 1944:
In the largest carrier battle in history, the Battle of the Philippine Sea, more than 600 Japanese aircraft are destroyed and three carriers sunk for a loss of 123 U.S. aircraft.

23-26 October 1944:
In a series of engagements collectively called the Battle of Leyte Gulf, naval aircraft help beat back Japan's final large naval offensive.

18 March 1945:
The Okinawa campaign begins.



29 September 1946:
P2V-1 Neptune completes record-setting non-stop flight of 11,235.6 miles from Perth, Australia, to Columbus, Ohio, in 55 hours and 17 minutes.

9 November 1950:
Over Yalu River, Cmdr. William Amen becomes first Navy jet pilot to shoot down another jet.



30 October 1946:
Navy successfully tests first ejection seat at Lakehurst, N.J.

1 February 1952:
CNO approves Project 27C, to install first angled flight decks on carriers.



1 May 1951:
AD Skyraiders from USS *Princeton* (CV 37) successfully attack the Hwachon Dam with torpedoes.

28 April 1952:
Navy adopts British-developed steam catapults for carriers.

10 September 1959:
The Bureau of Aeronautics is merged with the Bureau of Ordnance to become the new Bureau of Naval Weapons.



13 April 1960:
The first satellite of TRANSIT, the first operational satellite navigation system, is sent into orbit.



25 April 1959:
The Bullpup, the first mass-produced air-to-surface missile, is deployed overseas.

1936

AIRCRAFT IN SERVICE: 1,741

1941

WORLD WAR II

40,912

1946

14,036

1951

KOREAN WAR

16,440

1956

11,254

1961

30 September 1937:
USS *Yorktown* (CV 5) commissioned.

30 August 1939:
XJO-3 is first twin-engined aircraft to land on and take-off from carrier.

22 March 1940:
Naval Aircraft Factory begins U.S. guided missile program.

7 August 1941:
BuAer issues first plan for installing radar on U.S. naval aircraft.

7 December 1941:
The Imperial Japanese Navy attacks the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor.

1943: F6F Hellcat enters service.

31 December 1942:
USS *Essex* (CV 9) commissioned.

10 September 1945:
USS *Midway* (CV 41) commissioned.

1947: FH Phantom and P2V/P-2 Neptune enter service.

1946: AD/A-1 Skyraider enters service.

1949: F9F Panther enters service.

1948: F2H Banshee enters service.

1954: HSS-1 Seabat enters service.

1956: A4D/A-4 Skyhawk enters service.

1960: F4H/F-4 Phantom II enters service.

20 March 1953:
Airship ZP2N-1 sets world distance record of 9,448 miles in 264 hours.

3 September 1952:
The XAAM-N-7, the prototype of the AIM-9A Sidewinder air-to-air missile, is first fired successfully.

2 October 1950:
BuAer establishes Project Arowa for developing practical weather forecasting.



01 October 1955:
USS *Forrestal* (CV 59), the first "super carrier," commissioned.



25 April 1956: Mirrored landing systems are ordered to be installed on all carriers.



U.S. NAVAL AVIATION COMES OF AGE: 1936-1961

U.S. Naval Aviation was suddenly thrust into prominence when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor left the Pacific Fleet with few offensive tools other than its carriers. The numerous islands of the Central and South Pacific—over which much of the war was fought—also ensured that land-based Marine Corps air power would contribute as well. The first year of the war would see both spectacular sea battles and long contests of endurance, such as the Guadalcanal campaign, where naval air power proved decisive. After the tide turned in 1943, Naval Aviation was at the forefront of every U.S. offensive across the Pacific. When the last major Japanese naval combatant—the super battleship *Yamato*—sortied for a final time in April 1945, 300 U.S. naval aircraft sent the world's largest surface ship to the bottom of the East China Sea—and signaled Naval Aviation's coming of age. Naval air power would again play an important role in a very different war in Korea five years later, setting the stage for Naval Aviation as a key "crisis response" tool in the post-war world.